創価大学
国際仏教学高等研究所
年　報

平成26年度
（第１8号）

Annual Report
of
The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology
at Soka University

for the Academic Year 2014

Volume XVIII

Five Unnoticed Donative Inscriptions and the Relative Chronology of Sanchi Stūpa II

Matthew D. MILLIGAN

In a recent research trip to the Early Historic Period Buddhist site of Sanchi[1] in modern Madhya Pradesh, I re-read, photographed, and catalogued the hundreds of donative inscriptions found on the *vedika* architectural fragments on all three major stūpa-s. When I began comparing and contrasting what was found in Marshall, Foucher, and Majumdar's *The Monuments of Sanchi* (1982) volumes with my records I noticed a small discrepancy in the list of inscriptions from stūpa II. Curiously, five pavement slab inscriptions could not be found in Marshall's list, Lüders' old list (1912), or in Tsukamoto's (1996) more recent catalogue. After carefully searching all known publications of the Sanchi inscriptions, I determined that these five donative inscriptions were unnoticed by previously scholars who all undoubtedly relied heavily upon Marshall or Lüders' list without ever revisiting the source material. Although the reason for their exclusion from previous lists could be many, it may be possible that these architectural fragments were spurious additions by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) when the monuments were reconstructed, meaning that they were removed from a different area of the site and placed inside the circumambulatory path sometime before, during, or after Marshall's time. In this brief article, I present the five previously unnoticed donative inscriptions and attempt to provide new insights into dating stūpa II. Additionally, to flush out what is known and unknown about the stūpa II inscriptions, I compare some recurring donor names to those found at stūpa I and Bharhut. I assemble evidence to augment the relative chronology of stūpa II and its approximate date compared to the other stūpa-s.

Inscription 1 - N. Pavement Slab 1 (figure 1)
(in North Indian Brāhmī, c. 100 BCE)

Just inside the north *vedika* entrance is a pavement slab with the following complete donative inscription:

> 1 Samikāya vaghumatikasa dānaṁ
>
> "The gift of (the woman) Samikā, from Vaghumata."

There is nothing particularly striking about this inscription other than the woman's personal name and location of residence. The name Samikā is a decidedly common personal name in the Sanchi inscriptional corpus, appearing in at least six other inscriptions throughout the site. Since this woman is from Vaghumata, I am unable to match her with other women with the same name who provide other places of origin. It is possible that the same woman over the course of time simply moved from Vaghumata to another place, such as the city of Ujjain (or vice versa, depending on the date of the inscription). It is also possible that she became a nun later in life, since at least one of the other Samikās found in the inscriptional corpus identifies herself as a nun. Vaghumata is a place of origin for at least two donors from Sanchi's stūpa no. 1 ground *vedika*.

Inscription 2 - N. Pavement Slab 2 (figure 2)
(in North Indian Brāhmī, c. 100 BCE)

1 vanikasa

"of the trader…"

This brief inscription is obviously incomplete or displaced. The mercantile presence at stūpa sites in Madhya Pradesh is unsurprising given the hundreds of other donative inscriptions with references to merchants, various craftsmen, and guilds. Upon inspection, the proximity of this inscription to inscription no. 1 allows for the potential that the two were meant to be placed together and were separated only for convenience. However, I am unable to think of any other inscriptions of this kind at Sanchi, so the possibility remains improbable.

Inscription 3 - N. Pavement Slab 3 (figure 3)
(in North Indian Brāhmī, c. 100 BCE)

1 …lāya bhikuniya danaṁ

"The gift of the nun [Acalā?]."

The fragmented inscription may be an incomplete rendering of an inscription found from stūpa I's *vedika*. That inscription (Tsu. 156/MM 170)[2] reads:

1 Nadinagarā Acalaya bhikhuniya dānaṁ [/]

"The gift of the nun Acalā from Nadinagarā."

However, comparing my photograph, rubbing and personal inspection with Marshall's plates, I find it unlikely to be exactly the same except for the donor's name as potentially determined by the case ending.

---

[2] All references to previously published inscriptions will be provided with their numbers in their list publication. Tsukamoto's (1996) catalogue are represented with "Tsu." in accordance to the find-site. Marshall-Foucher-Majumdar's list in *The Monuments of Sanchi* (1982) are represented with a simple "MM." Lastly, Lüders-Waldschmidt-Mahendale's *Bharhut Inscriptions* (1963) are labeled with "Lüders" only. Any place where an inscription appears in more than one of these lists the numbers are separated with a common slash (/).

Inscription 4 - E. Pavement Slab (figure 4)

(in North Indian Brāhmī, c. 100 BCE)

1 Samanaura-matu dānaṁ

"The gift of the mother of a novice…"

No possible connections were found to other inscriptions even though it is a complete record. The title Samanaura is a misspelling of Samanera, 'novice.'

Inscription 5 - S. Pavement Slab (figure 5)

(in North Indian Brāhmī, c. 100 BCE)

1 Gavipu…[bhichu]nina[ṁ] dānaṁ

"The gift of some nuns…"

The incomplete letters were not matched with any previously occurring personal name or place of origin.

Context of the Site

Sanchi stūpa II has long served as one of the primary chronological markers for Early Historic Period Buddhist India because of its relief art, relationships to both the Great Stūpa of Sanchi and the remnants from Bharhut. Although the exact chronologies of Sanchi and Bharhut are blurred by the relative dating of artistic styles, inscriptional paleography, and association (or lack thereof) with normative monastic texts, it is clear that much of the material found at both sites is early, possibly c. 200 BCE, and may function as some of our best options for the study of early Indian Buddhism. The five inscriptions presented here are completely average in that they do not contribute any new information or even begin to clarify the problem of relative dating. Instead, these inscriptions reinforce what is already known about stūpa II and marginally increase known information pertaining to the scope and breadth of the patronage network of the period, which is around the 1st century BCE or slightly earlier.[3]

Stūpa II at Sanchi lies down the hill from the largest structure of the Sanchi hilltop, stūpa I. John Marshall's excavations and detailed study of all the Sanchi architecture revealed a possible Aśokan date for the founding of the site. However, aside from Aśoka's schism edict found on a fractured pillar immediately to the south of stūpa I's ground balustrade, there are no known inscriptions from the earliest time period. If Aśoka erected the pillar and founded the site in the middle of the 3rd century BCE, the earliest preserved layer of inscriptional activity comes more than a century later and may be found on the *vedika*-s of

---

[3.]   Along the same lines, the content of the inscriptions is very similar to that of Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa I. The presentation and language of the name, place of origin, profession, and status within the community is virtually the same. Three of the previously unnoticed donative inscriptions also refer to monastic donors, which is a common phenomenon within all Early Historic era Buddhist epigraphy. See, for example, some work by Gregory Schopen (Schopen, 2004).

stūpa-s I and II, thus making the well-preserved Brāhmī Prakrit records some of the earliest written materials from the region. Donative inscriptions from other sites such as Pauni or even single inscriptions from places like Mawasa may date to earlier time periods but do not yield a large cache for which statistical analysis and detailed sociological investigation may be carried out. It is thought that Sanchi stūpa II, the Bharhut stūpa and their associated *vedika* inscriptions date to the same paleographic time period and therefore may be compared and contrasted directly together to produce sociological insights into early Buddhist patronage.

Unlike the Great Stūpa (I) at Sanchi, stūpa II contained relics buried inside within a sandstone box. Although it is quite possible that stūpa I once housed relics of some great monastic teacher, such as the Buddha himself, it is impossible to theorize as to the exact contents or accompanying inscriptions. In its place, the reliquaries from stūpa II have received some scholarly attention over the years partially because they are so well preserved and labeled with names and titles. The inscribed sandstone box contained five reliquaries with burnt human bones inside. Accompanying inscriptions describe the deceased as members of the Hemavata school. Undoubtedly, these reliquaries were enshrined in this particular stūpa for veneration, probably by their monastic disciples and disciples of disciples, given that a majority of the donors contributing towards the construction of the stūpa itself (as found in the donative inscriptions found on the *vedika*) were self-identifying monks and nuns.

Dating the Sanchi Stūpa II *Vedika*

The closest and perhaps best reference for dating stūpa II's *vedika* based on its paleography and artistic style is the nearby buff sandstone Besnagar Garuḍa pillar donated by the Greek Heliodoros. As an envoy from Taxila sent by the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas at the end of the 2nd century BCE, most likely between 130–100 BCE, Heliodoros visited the court of Kāśīputra Bhāgabhadra (Salomon, 1998, pp. 141, 265–147). According to textual accounts, after the fall of the Mauryan empire, Puśyamitra Śuṅga began the Śuṅgan imperial dynasty, kept the capital in Pataliputra, and maintained a close, probably mostly mercantile, relationship with Vidisha, the closest city to Sanchi and home of the Heliodoros pillar. The fifth ruler according to the Puranic list of Śuṅgan kings was Bhāgabhadra, named in the Heliodoros inscription. Coins bearing Heliodoros' own name were minted in the Northwest (Bopearachchi, 1989; Willis, Cribb, & Shaw, 2000, p. 57) and further suggest a late 2nd century BCE timeframe.

Some art historians have suggested a link between the flat, linear artistic styles of birds, flowers, and garlands seen at the Heliodoros pillar in Vidisha, Sanchi stūpa II, the Bharhut *vedika*, and early stone sculpture at Mathura (Quintanilla, 2007, pp. 13–14). Although the Heliodoros pillar, Sanchi stūpa II (not necessarily the *vedika*), and Bharhut all likely date to the late 2nd century, Quintanilla suggested that the tradition of such stone sculptural production, at least at Mathura, probably started in the middle of that century. Despite the stylistic comparisons between the sites, the names provided in the inscriptions

may prove to be something of a red herring for historians.[4]

For example, although there is a distinct "Bharhut Style" of carving found at Vidisha and Sanchi at the end of the 2nd century, the name mentioned in the well-known Bharhut gateway inscription, Dhanabhūti, was very likely not a Śuṅgan king at all. Traditionally, the inscription has been taken to mean that Dhanabhūti was a monarch within the Śuṅgan dynasty. However, the inscription very likely meant to say only that Dhanabhūti was a ruler at the same time as the Śuṅgas. Additionally, none of the ancestral names found on Dhanabhūti's gateway inscription appear on known textual lists of the Śuṅgan dynasty. Therefore, attempting to utilize the Śuṅgas as a catchall cultural sphere to which we can blindly place the four sites, Mathura, Vidisha, Sanchi, and Bharhut, is problematic. Not even the name Dhanabhūti, which appears at both Bharhut and Mathura can be taken to be the same person (Quintanilla, 2007, p. 8ff.). Thus begins our problem with firmly dating the inscriptions and our eventual use of relative dating based on style and paleography.[5]

Richard Salomon once cautiously pointed out that precise claims for paleographically dating inscriptions should "not be uncritically accepted." One remedy would be to "adopt Ramesh's principle of plus or minus one hundred years for the range of accuracy of paleographic dating" (Salomon, 1998, p. 170). Applying this principle to the problematic case of Sanchi II, Bharhut, and the Heliodoros pillar pushes the solution farther away and further implies a need to proceed carefully.

Until very recently, there have been few new findings or attempts to reconsider the artistic and paleographic findings from Bharhut, which in turn meant that stūpa II at Sanchi was scarcely revisited as well. Fortunately, the two new articles found in previous issues of this journal by von Hinüber and Skilling (2013) and now Salomon and Marino (2014) added new material for study in ancient central India. The stūpa site Deor Kothar yielded two fragmentary Brāhmī pillar inscriptions in Prakrit which might be some of the earliest Buddhist inscriptions after Aśoka's edicts. They date to approximately the 2nd century BCE and present interesting genealogical inscriptions that could refer all the way back to the Buddha. In addition to new genealogical content, which is quite new to the corpus of early Indian Buddhist epigraphy, the inscriptions provide new characters and sequences that can be studied in comparison to Bharhut and, perhaps eventually, Sanchi stūpa II. Unfortunately, such a lofty goal is not the purpose of the present paper but such a future study might go far in assisting to unravel the mystery of applying relative paleographic dating to these sites.[6] From a preliminary analysis, the five unnoticed inscriptions studied here seem to date to the

---

[4.] For a comprehensive presentation of the dynasties and relationships to some Buddhist sites, see (Shimada, 2013, pp. 31–58).

[5.] Problems of relative dating based on the comparing paleography is succinctly summarized and adequately discussed by Quintanilla (Singh, 2010, p. 73).

[6.] High definition photographs of all the inscriptions from all three sites would be necessary for detailed comparison. At present, such materials are not within my grasp although in the future I hope that scholars may make digital files containing 3D image renderings of Indian epigraphs available on the Internet for processing and analysis. Scholars studying ancient Mediterranean epigraphy currently have this capability. See the website http://www.digitalepigraphy.org for reference. I plan to publish my own database of central Indian inscriptions by 2016. The database would be in the style of the Bibliotheca Polyglotta's "The Ashoka Library," found at http://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/.

same or nearby paleographic generation as the *vedika* inscriptions from stūpa II, which would mean they also inherit the *vedika* inscriptions' relationship to Bharhut and Deor Kothar, if there is indeed any relationship at all.

Some recent observations at Bharhut and Sanchi are worthy additions to the corpus of what is known about Sanchi stūpa II. J. Hawkes suggested that "changes made over time to the railing [at Bharhut] and its carved programme suggests changes in the use of the monument" (Hawkes, 2008, p. 10). This important point is equally applicable to the *vedika* at Sanchi stūpa II as we know that railings and pillars were undoubtedly added as time passed (Willis et al., 2000). Hawkes tentatively connected such stylistic changes with changes occurring within the monastic Buddhist institution itself, correctly implying that the sites as well as the people and institutions involved in creating, administrating, and preserving them, were not static entities but rather living bodies in a constant state of flux. This is especially true if these sites were consistently inhabited and used over several centuries given their probable Aśokan origin. Therefore, it would make sense for the artistic styles as well as the paleographic intricacies to change and ultimately fluctuate between conservative and innovative, thereby further complicating nearly any attempt at relative historical dating.

While Hawkes' remarks are well taken, there are, at least according to F. Asher, some broad strokes that may be analyzed to determine a relative chronological sculptural sequence to early Buddhist art. Asher suggested that Sanchi stūpa II was very likely *not* one of the first major monuments following the Mauryan period given that it rests on an artificial terrace below the rest of the Sanchi's hilltop monuments (2006, p. 57). Further, stūpa II enshrined what he called "lesser personages" compared to that of the Buddha or of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, famously enshrined on the hilltop proper in stūpa III. Moreover, the so-called "crude" or "primitive" style of stūpa II's reliefs definitely continued well into the 1st century BCE. Asher also revisited the assessment of the donor seṭhin Nāgapiya from Achāvaḍa whose name appears on both the *vedika* of Sanchi stūpa II and stūpa I. Some scholars (Willis et al., 2000, p. 59) proposed that the two donors could not have possibly been the same since the construction of both *vedika*-s was too far apart. Asher warned that the evidence was "marshaled to fit the assumption" (Asher, 2006, p. 58). One potential hole, as Asher pointed out, in the assumption is that two distinct artistic styles could certainly *not* prevail simultaneously at a single site at the same time. Allowing for the potential of two different workshops to work the same site at the same time could, theoretically, allow for the possibility that the *vedika*-s from stūpa I and stūpa II at Sanchi to be contemporaneous despite their distinctive styles and subject matters. Using all of the donor names provided from stūpa II, I reassess both the case of Nāgapiya and others in the next section.

In Asher's view, early Buddhist monuments might be grouped stylistically as opposed to regionally. "Very likely," he says, "there is a chronological order to these groups" (Asher, 2006, p. 63). The order goes: 1.) the Mauryan group, meaning the pillars with lion capitals and inscriptions; 2.) the planar group, which specifically means the Bharhut and Sanchi II styles; 3.) the Bodh Gaya group, which refers to a small group of monuments (namely the Bodh Gaya *vedika*) and some individual pieces of art; and the 4.) highly modeled group, which primarily features the reliefs from Sanchi stūpa I as well as sculptures from Amaravati

and elsewhere. Asher ended his chronology of early Buddhist material culture at the Kuṣāṇa period. That period, he claimed, contains changes that are abrupt and mark the official transition out of the Mauryan influence, such as the introduction of the anthropomorphic depiction of the Buddha (although this particular part of the timeline is contested).

In the end, all of the timelines more or less derive from Marshall, Foucher, and Majumdar's work at Sanchi. The recent observations on the Sanchi area by Michael D. Willis and Julia Shaw (2007) have gone far in locating the nuances required for making highly informed guesses regarding the timeline and relative dating. The most widely accepted general timeline begins with Bharhut (and its inscriptions) in the late 2nd century BCE (Willis et al., 2000, pp. 55–57), then goes to Sanchi stūpa II and its *vedika* slightly later, then Sanchi stūpa I's *vedika*, then the Sanchi stūpa I *toraṇa*-s.[7] However, even though the actual dates of this timeline are flexible—perhaps even very flexible—there are some vital remarks that must be considered.

First, these monuments were not built over night and may have taken many years if not decades to complete, especially the *vedika* and gateways at Sanchi's Great Stūpa. A hidden factor may have been the money earned through donations required to employ workers to cut, transport, carve, and setup the structures. This process means that construction projects could have overlapped, as might the funding for such monuments. Second, with time, structures decay or are deliberately replaced or repaired for a variety of reasons. In such times, new uprights or crossbars could have been added along with new donative records. Lastly, individual pieces of a monument cannot possibly date a whole monument. For instance, the reliquary and human remains from stūpa II may indeed date to an earlier period than the surrounding *vedika*. Even though this fine distinction is easy to forget, if properly understood, it can contribute a great deal to filling in the missing gaps in our history.

Connections Between Donors: A Reassessment

Looking at the relationships between donors from stūpa II's *vedika*, which now includes the five unnoticed reliefs presented above, stūpa I's *vedika* and *toraṇa*, and Bharhut, I considered two hypotheses in attempting to determine a relative chronology:

1.) stūpa II's *vedika* is nearly contemporaneous with Bharhut's *vedika* and gateways and earlier than Sanchi stūpa I's *vedika*.

2.) stūpa II's *vedika* was a nearly simultaneous construction project with stūpa I and possesses an unclear historical relationship with Bharhut's *vedika*.

To determine which is the best hypothesis given our limited evidence of archaeology, art, and epigraphy, I focused primarily on the epigraphy given the deployment of the Nāgapiya inscription by scholars in the past. Moreover, the five previously unnoticed donative

---

[7.]   Two important works on Sanchi stūpa II highlight its imagery and pre-Buddhist cult themes. These are taken to be indicators of an early date. See Bénisti (1986) and Taddei (1996). Karlsson (2006, p. 80) follows Rowland (1967, p. 88) in placing Bharhut between Sanchi stūpa II and stūpa I at no earlier than 100 BCE.

inscriptions presented above may contribute some new data to consider.

The case of Nāgapiya the banker who appears on both stūpa II's *vedika* and on stūpa I's railing is quite odd. The second hypothesis claims that the two *vedika*'s are roughly contemporaneous. However, the gateways of the Great Stūpa have always been considered later than even stūpa I's *vedika*. There are a few possible explanations here: 1.) there were a series of descendants who held the name Nāgapiya, the seṭhin from Achāvaḍa; 2.) the banker was very young when he first contributed to the construction of stūpa II's *vedika* and was still alive, albeit very old, at the time of stūpa I's gateway construction. The last explanation 3.) is that this is simply a case of coincidence. While the case of Nāgapiya the donor is far from a smoking gun in dating the two *vedika*-s, the simplest explanation, that it is indeed the same donor but at different parts of his life, may be the best in that it fits both hypotheses regarding the date. Nāgapiya's inscription by itself supports the second hypothesis: that the *vedika*-s, and possibly the gateways, were built together at about the same time. The timeline the Nāgapiya inscriptions create begins with stūpa II's *vedika* and ends with the gateway on stūpa I. Given that in one of the stūpa I gateway inscriptions Nāgapiya is a donor together along with a son, it feels safe to view the chronology between these three architectural constructions as being within the adult lifespan of Nāgapiya himself, since we know that there likely was not a tradition of naming the son after the father in this family. If he was perhaps a very young man when he first donated and a very old man when he donated again, we may have a period of 40–60 years, depending on how long Nāgapiya may have lived. Since scholars are now fairly certain that the gateway dates to approximately the turn of the millennium in either the very late 1st century BCE or the very early 1st century CE, this might put the inscribing of stūpa II's *vedika* at c. ~75–50 BCE, which is considerably later than the late 2nd century BCE date previously and commonly assigned.

To test this conclusion teased by the Nāgapiya inscription, I studied all the other stūpa II *vedika* donors to determine their relationship, if any, to other donors at any of our key sites, namely other structures and inscriptions at Sanchi, at Bharhut, and the Sanchi satellite sites like Sonari. Unfortunately, given the limited number of donative inscriptions that exist throughout time, only a small number of donor names repeat elsewhere. To separate names that simply repeat from names that have a good chance at being the same person appearing at two different sites, I looked at commonalities in the inscriptions, which were the stated locality of the donor, the stated profession (which included monks and nuns), and relationship, if any, to other donors, such as monastic pupils, relatives, etc. I found nine donors, including Nāgapiya, which could have referenced the same donor. The most important ones are described below.

Some of the connections indicate that the berm balustrade from stūpa I may be contemporaneous or nearly so to the *vedika* from stūpa II. The nun Dhamasenā from Kurara is a donor at both places where the inscriptions use the same description to identify her.[8] Given the berm *vedika*'s small size and artistic style, it would make sense for it to have been built by the same builders or at least in the same style to stūpa II's *vedika*. Dhamasenā's case

---

[8.]   Her inscriptions are: at stūpa II, 1.) Tsu. 722/MM 664; 2.) at stūpa I's berm *vedika*, Tsu. 548/ MM 562 and 3.) Tsu. 562/MM 576.

gives us a more definitive clue as to what to look for in other inscriptions.

The monk Sagharakhita from Kurara also appears in these two places: the stūpa II *vedika* (Tsu. 698/MM 640) and the stūpa I stairway/berm *vedika* (Tsu. 597/MM 611). The connection between the names in these inscriptions rests on the donors' place of origin, like Dhamasenā's inscriptions. The stūpa II *vedika* inscription reads *korarasa* ('[from] Kurara'). Meanwhile, in the stūpa I berm *vedika* inscription the record reads *Koragharānaṁ* ('[from] Koraghara.') in the genitive plural. The plurality of the word is not the issue as it refers to the group of donors mentioned (Kāḍā Subhagā Pusā Nāgadata Sagharakhita). However, the actual locality as it is spelled requires some explanation. At first glance, the village, Koraghara, seems to be an entirely different village from Kurara. However, Tsukamoto (1996, p. 830) and others (Singh, 2010, p. 73) have rightly broken down the form into *Kurara-gṛha* and as such have included all of the donors from Kuraghara into the tabulations for Kurara. If this is so, and it appears that the variants such as Kuraghara, and Korara are also included, then there is yet another connection between the two *vedika*-s. The donor Sagharakhita from Kurara contributed to both *vedika*-s and, perhaps later, sponsored a stairway *vedika* fragment with (monastic?) friends. Sagharakhita was quite a busy donor since his name might appear in an inscription from Sonari, a nearby satellite site to Sanchi. At Sonari (Tsu. 2), the inscription reads "A gift of the monk Sagharakhita, who is the pupil of Aya Pasanaka." Although Sagharakhita is a common monastic personal name, there is reason to at least consider, albeit with considerable caution, that this could be the same man given Sagharakhita from Kurara's active participation in the region. If this *is* the same monk Sagharakhita from Kurara, then he appeared at the reliquary site of Sonari later in his life to honor his monastic teacher, Noble Pasanaka. Coincidentally, Pasanaka himself may have had a long life as well since his name—again, assuming it is the same man—appears on the Sanchi stūpa I *vedika* three times (Tsu. 130, 134, 135/MM 144, 148, 149). If such a connection existed, it would indicate that within the life of Aya Pasanaka, both some part of Sonari and the *vedika* to stūpa I were constructed. Additionally, it could be that within the life of Aya Pasanaka that the berm *vedika* at stūpa I and the *vedika* from stūpa II were also constructed. If Aya Pasanaka lived a fair life of 60 years, it is entirely possible that all of these features date to a period within 30-50 years.

If the *vedika*-s from stūpa I and stūpa II were built during the same period, meaning that they were both roughly contemporaneous with each other and also Bharhut, as the second hypothesis claims, then it would be a fascinating choice to build stūpa I's *vedika* in an entirely different style, size, and vision than the berm *vedika* from the same structure. By this account, it seems more likely that the first hypothesis is true, with zero degrees of relative separation between Sanchi II's *vedika* and I's berm *vedika*. In this timeline, there is one degree of separation between II's *vedika* and I's grand *vedika*.

Just how much time passed between the two periods seems to be within the life span of a monk's career. The donation of Nāgila, the pupil of Aya (Tsu. 690/MM 632) from Sanchi stūpa II's *vedika* may provide some clarity. There, the inscription reads "A pillar, the gift of all the relatives of bhadata Nāgila" (Tsu. 88/MM 102). If some time had passed between the construction of each stūpa's *vedika*, then perhaps Nāgila, a monk tutored under a

famous teacher known in stūpa 2, had in time become worthy of a title such as bhadata. This would make a donation by all of his relatives in his honor much more spiritually auspicious for them either sometime immediately after his passing or during his old age.[9]

In the same manner, Balaka, pupil of Aya Arahaguta from Sāsāda, appears at stūpa II but his teacher, Aya Arahaguta, appears as a donor on stūpa I's *vedika*. It is very likely the same Aya Arahaguta since they are both monks from Sāsāda. The inscriptions are unusually clear here in providing the proper connecting information of locality and profession. Again, the evidence points to the construction or at least funding of both separate *vedika*-s during the lifespan and career of a single individual.

The donor Budharakhita at stūpa II gives us a possible *terminus post quem* for the relative chronology. Even though there are several matches to the masculine name Budharakhita at Sanchi, none match exactly the place of origin (Arapāna) or profession (sutātika, 'versed in the *suttanta*-s'). Nevertheless, interestingly, there are several inscriptions from Bharhut which are worthy of mention. One (Tsu. no 104/Lüders et al. A58) references a monk with two titles which are worthy of prestige: bhadata and satupadāna. Bhadata is a clear monastic title ('venerable') and satupadāna was previously translated as something that could resemble a monastic title. Lüders, Waldschmidt, and Mahendale (1963) presented the most convincing translation of that title, arguing that it is an "imperfect spelling for sattupādāna=Sk srishtopādāna [sic], '[one] who has abandoned attachment'" (p. 38).[10] Another inscription (Tsu. 186/ Lüders et al. A57) gives Budharakhita the title pa[ṁ]ca-nekāyikasa, or '[he] who knows the five *nikāya*-s' (p. 37). Again, the donor Budharakhita is given a prestigious monastic title associated with what we might come to eventually call Buddhist canonical literature, such as the known words 'nekāya (=nikāya),' and 'sutātika' (=suttantika), which was found at Sanchi stūpa II's *vedika*. Lüders et al. argued against Barua in thinking that even though this Budharakhita is not expressly called a *bhikkhu*, he almost certainly was part of the monastic order. These few Bharhut inscriptions may form a strong but tentative monastic connection between Sanchi stūpa II and Bharhut, two stūpa sites that were previously thought to be contemporaneous based on their art.[11] If Bharhut is indeed slightly older than stūpa II's *vedika*, it cannot be *that* much older given Budharakhita's monastic career and sponsorship at both sites.

[9.]   Another possible connection between stūpa II and stūpa I lies with the donation by the monk Yakhila. At stūpa II he is stated just as a monk while at stūpa I he is a monk that is the monastic pupil to aya Devagiri. However, this is also a red herring because it is impossible to know whether or not this is the same monk. If stūpa I's *vedika* is indeed later it may just be a coincidence.

[10.]   Most recently, Dehejia (1997, p. 107) followed Lüders' translation. Previously, Lamotte (1988, p. 414) translated it as '[one] devoted to the application of mindfulness.' All of these translations emend Hultzsch, who took it as Sk. 'sāstropādāna,' or '[he] who is versed in sciences,' and are substantial reinterpretations from Cunningham's who postulated that the word referenced a place of origin. Satupadāna does not appear as far as scholars can tell in any canonical literature.

[11.]   A possible problem for this line of thought comes in another inscription (Tsu. 176/Lüders et al. A55). In that inscription, a man named Budharakhita is called rupakāraka, which may be translated as 'sculptor.' Given the prominence of the mercantile classes in these inscriptions, along with the presence of various kinds of craftsman, it could very well be that this is another, non-monastic Budharakhita. Or, possibly, the same Budharakhita was a monastic-sculptor, although this connection is pushing the limits of what these inscriptions can tell us.

Returning to the case of Nāgapiya, if Budharakhita links stūpa II to Bharhut, and Nāgapiya links stūpa II to the Great Stūpa's gateways, we can tentatively build both a *terminus post quem* and a *terminus ante quem*. The key here is that both relative chronological limits could be within a single human's lifespan. To recap, hypothesis one posits that stūpa II's *vedika* is roughly contemporaneous with Bharhut but earlier than stūpa I's *vedika* (and subsequently, its *toraṇa*). The second hypothesis works with the assumption that simultaneous construction projects may have put both stūpa I and stūpa II's *vedika*-s in the same time period. Although the limited evidence mustered here cannot definitively determine which hypothesis is closer to the truth, in studying both hypothesis using previously known art historical and archaeological arguments combined with an epigraphic survey and analysis, I posit a slightly augmented relative chronology. Bharhut comes first (although the *vedika* there seems to be earlier than its *toraṇa*, as per the recurring theme at these types of sites), next comes Sanchi stūpa II's *vedika*, stūpa I's berm *vedika*, stūpa I's ground *vedika*, and, finally, stūpa I's own *toraṇa*-s. The major insight stemming from my small study is that *all* of these periods could have been closer together than previously thought — so close together, in fact, that they might have been within a single person's lifetime, meaning 30–60 years.

Conclusion

The arguments linking Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa II based on artistic style and epigraphy are convincing, as are the attempts to provide a date using the Besnagar Garuḍa pillar. However, the evidence presented above suggests caution in assigning a precise date to these structures, let alone an early date, relative or otherwise. Given the possibility that Bharhut and the earliest inscribed monuments at Sanchi were all erected within a limited amount of time, such as the lifetime of an average person, a conservative timeline may be the best option. One such conservative timeline pushes the *vedika*-s from Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa II back from circa late 2nd century BCE into circa mid-1st century BCE to better align with the erection of stūpa I's *toraṇa*-s.

Such an adjustment may coincide well with what Willis proposed as the date of Gotiputa and the Hemavata monastic teachers enshrined in stūpa II. Willis proposed that Gotiputa may have lived in and around the Sanchi area during the middle of the 2nd century BCE. Although Willis (2001, p. 228) suggested a similar date for the stūpa II *vedika*-s, it seems much more likely that the *vedika*-s were built sometime after the stūpa was built, which would have, in turn, been built sometime after Gotiputa and the others had died. Therefore, I propose a mid 1st-century BCE approximate date for the *terminus post quem* for all of the Sanchi inscriptions, which would better link the paleography of the site internally since there is little development in paleography from stūpa II's *vedika* to stūpa I's *toraṇa*.

The five previously unnoticed donative inscriptions reinforce the solution presented here. Even though it is unknown whether or not these five inscriptions were actually originally intended to serve as pavement slabs at stūpa II specifically, it may not matter since the Brāhmī matches nearly perfectly with the entire era's Brāhmī at Sanchi. Some of the generic architectural pieces like pavement slabs could have been deliberately made as such in

order to provide proper filler for an ongoing program of construction projects. After all, it is easier to shape and mold generic slabs like these into the proper jigsaw puzzle pieces than crossbars and uprights, which were all cut with a specific purpose and place in mind at a specific architectural feature.

References and Abbreviations

Asher, F. M. (2006). "Early Indian Art Reconsidered." In P. Olivelle (Ed.), *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE* (pp. 51–66). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bénisti, M. (1986). "Observations concernant le stūpa no 2 de Sāñcī." *Bulletin d'Etudes Indiennes, 4*, 165–170.

Bopearachchi, O. (1989). "Monnaies Indo-Grecques sur Frappées." *Revue Numismatique, 31*, 63–64.

Dehejia, V. (1997). *Discourse in early Buddhist art: visual narratives of India*: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Hawkes, J. D. (2008). "Bharhut: A Reassessment." *South Asian Studies, 24*(1), 1–14.

von Hinüber, O., & Skilling, P. (2013). "Two Buddhist Inscriptions from Deorkothar (Dist. Rewa, Madhya Pradesh)." *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University, 16*, 13–26.

Karlsson, K. (2006). "The Formation of Early Buddhist Visual Culture." *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief, 2*(1), 68--95.

Lamotte, E. (1988). *Histoire du bouddhisme indien: des origins a`l'eře Sáka* (S. Webb-Boin, Trans.). Louvain: Universite de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste.

Lüders, H. (1912). *A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions* (Vol. 10).

Lüders = Lüders, H., Waldschmidt, E., & Mahendale, M. A. (1963). *Bharhut Inscriptions*. Ootacamund: Government Epigraphist for India.

MM = Marshall, J., and Foucher, Alfred. (1982). *The Monuments of Sanchi* (Vol. 1). Delhi: Swati Publications.

Quintanilla, S. R. (2007). *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura, Ca. 150 BCE-100 CE*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Rowland, B. (1967). *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Salomon, R. (1998). *Indian Epigraphy : A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the other Indo-Aryan Languages: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the other Indo-Aryan Languages*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Salomon, R., & Marino, J. (2014). "Observations on the Deorkothar Inscriptions and Their Significance for Evaluation of Buddhist Historical Traditions." *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University, 17*, 27–40.

Schopen, G. (2004). "What's in a Name: The Religious Function of the Early Donative Inscriptions." In *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still more papers on monastic Buddhism in India* (pp. 382–394). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Shaw, J. (2007). *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Religious and Social change, c. Third Century BC to Fifth Century AD*. London: The British Association for South Asian Studies: The British Academy.

Shimada, A. (2013). *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great* Stūpa *at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE-300 CE)*. Oxford: Brill.

Singh, A. K. (2010). "Donors of Korara." In Y. Sharma & O. P. Misra (Eds.), *Discovering Vidisha: Art, Archaeology and Architecture* (pp. 73–76). New Delhi: Aryan Books International.

Taddei, M. (1996). "The First Beginnings: Sculptures on Stūpa 2." In V. Dehejia (Ed.), *Unseen Presence, The Buddha and Sanchi* (pp. 77–91). Bombay: Marg.

Tsu. = Tsukamoto, K. (1996). *Indo Bukkyo himei no kenkyu (A Comprehensive Study of Indian Buddhist Inscriptions)* (Part 1-3). Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten.

Willis, M. D. (2001). "Buddhist Saints in Ancient Vedisa." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 11*(2), 219–228.

Willis, M. D., Cribb, J., & Shaw, J. (2000). *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*. London: British Museum Press.

Fig. 1: Inscription 1 - N. Pavement Slab 1

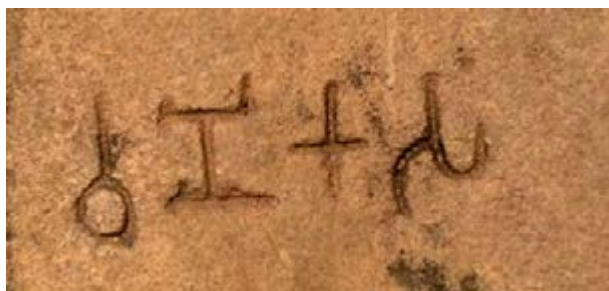Fig. 2: Inscription 2 - N. Pavement Slab 2

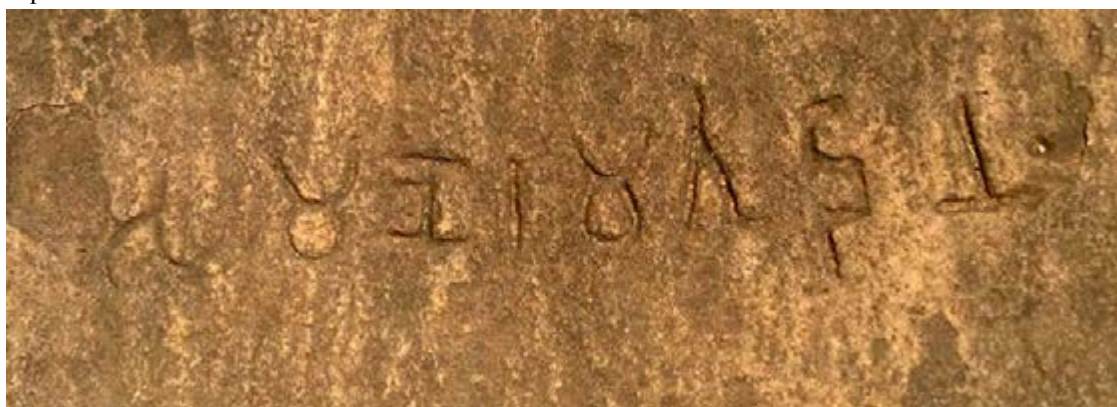Fig. 3: Inscription 3 - N. Pavement Slab 3

Fig. 4: Inscription 4 - E. Pavement Slab

Fig. 5: Inscription 5 - S. Pavement Slab